

STARS AND STRIPES

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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

British: Iraqi general captured

BY DAVID CRARY

The Associated Press

A general from Saddam Hussein's army has been captured in southern Iraq and is being pressed to provide strategic information, British officers said Sunday. An Iraqi official said 4,000 Arab volunteers have arrived, eager to carry out more suicide attacks against U.S. and British forces.

Four American infantrymen were killed in a suicide bomb attack in Iraq on Saturday, and on Sunday a man in civilian clothes rammed a white pickup truck into a group of U.S. soldiers standing by a store at their base in Kuwait.

About six people were injured in the attack at Camp Udairi, said Lt. Col. Larry Cox, public affairs officer at the Coalition press office in Kuwait City. An earlier report said 10 to 15 were hurt.

No explosives were found in the truck, a Pentagon official said.

The driver of the truck was a "third-country national" who was being detained by U.S. military forces, the official said, speaking on condition of anonymity. Another military official said the driver was not American and did not appear to be Kuwaiti. More than half of the people in Kuwait are foreign workers, many from the Philippines, India, Bangladesh and other Middle Eastern countries.

Army Gen. Tommy Franks, commander of the allied coalition, said he was unsure whether the two incidents were linked. He called the suicide attack "pure terrorism" and said his troops would henceforth exercise more caution in dealing with Iraqis.

Franks, at a briefing Sunday, also denied that he had asked the Pentagon for more troops before invading Iraq. He sidestepped a question about whether the war might last into the summer.

Franks was responding to published reports that the requests of U.S. generals for more ground troops were repeatedly denied by Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld. Reports also quoted U.S. military officials as saying the lack of troops and weapons meant the war might last into the summer.

"One never knows how long a war will take," Franks said.

Asked about the status of Saddam Hussein, Franks said he did not know.

"I don't know whether the leader of this regime is dead or alive," Franks said. "I have not seen credible evidence over the last period of days that



AP

British soldiers of 3rd Platoon, 1st Company of the Irish Guards check an Iraqi man in Basra on Friday. The man, who was with a group of Iraqis leaving Basra, was subsequently released with the others after they had their IDs checked.

this regime is being controlled from the top."

Group Capt. Al Lockwood, a British spokesman, said an Iraqi general was captured in the besieged city of Basra — the highest-ranking Iraqi prisoner of war thus far.

"We'll be asking him quite politely if he's willing to assist us to continue our operations against the paramilitary forces in Basra," Lockwood said.

Lockwood also said Royal Marine Commandos killed a Republican Guard colonel who apparently was sent to Basra to strengthen the resolve of the defense forces, who are encircled by British troops.

An unidentified Iraqi official in Basra, quoted by the Arab satellite television station al-Jazeera, denied the capture of a general and the killing of a colonel. The official also claimed four British soldiers were killed but did not elaborate.

Further north, along the approach routes to Baghdad, some American units have paused while supply lines are shored up, but others were engaged in battles to clear the way for an all-out assault. U.S. and British warplanes have focused three-quarters of

their strikes in recent days on Republican Guard positions defending the capital.

The U.S. Central Command said the latest targets hit by coalition aircraft included military facilities at the Abu Garayb Presidential Palace, the Karada military intelligence complex and the barracks of a major paramilitary training center, all in different sectors of Baghdad. Several telephone exchanges in the city also were hit Sunday, as was a train loaded with Republican Guard tanks.

Although coalition commanders have been unflaggingly upbeat about the progress of the war, American soldiers in the field were jolted by news of a car bombing Saturday in which an Iraqi soldier posing as a taxi driver gestured for help at a checkpoint near the city of Najaf, then blew up his car as soldiers approached. Four Americans from the Army's 1st Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division were killed; their names were not immediately released.

"It's a shame they are doing that, because now we're going to have to treat every civilian vehicle like it is hostile," said Staff Sgt. Bryce Ivings of Sarasota, Fla., a member of 3rd Battalion, 7th Infantry Regiment.

"If we accidentally kill a civilian because they took a wrong turn and came at us, it will be on their [the Iraqi leadership's] head."

Iraqi Information Minister Mohamed Saeed al-Sahhaf contended at a briefing Sunday that several Iraqi civilians had been shot dead in their cars by coalition soldiers in a mood for vengeance after the suicide attack.

Lt. Gen. Hazem al-Rawi, a senior Iraqi defense official, said the suicide attack marked "the beginning of a long path of jihad for Iraqis and Arabs against the invaders." More than 4,000 volunteers have come from numerous Arab countries to participate in suicide attacks, he said.

Iraq's state television reported that the Najaf bomber — identified as Ali Jaafar al-Noamani, a noncommissioned officer with several children — was posthumously promoted to colonel and awarded two medals by Saddam Hussein. His family reportedly was awarded the equivalent of \$34,000, a fortune in Iraq.

Iraq's vice president, Taha Yassin Ramadan, indicated the attack was part of a coordinated effort to thwart the invasion force, and he raised the specter of terrorism on U.S. or British soil.

"The day will come when a single martyrdom operation will kill 5,000 enemies," Ramadan said. "We will use any means to kill our enemy in our land and we will follow the enemy into its land. This is just the beginning."

Fighting continued in several areas, notably around the southern cities of An Nasiriyah and Basra.

Al-Sahhaf, the information minister, said Iraqi tribesmen had shot down an Apache helicopter near Basra, killing the pilot. U.S. Central Command said it had no information of such an incident.

In central Iraq, thousands of Marines pushed north Sunday in "seek and destroy" missions, trying to clear the route toward Baghdad that they have nicknamed "Ambush Alley." The Marines were ordered to question each Iraqi civilian they passed, then hand out ration packets as a gesture of goodwill. One unit took its chaplain along to oversee the aid distribution.

U.S. and British warplanes launched bombing raids early Sunday near Karbala, south of Baghdad, targeting Iraqi fuel storage depots.

Wing Commander Andy Suddards, who led a British Harrier raid on one of the depots, said one goal was to cut the fuel supply chain for Republican Guard tanks.

"The visibility was good and I saw the bang," Suddards said.

Franks says war in Iraq is 'in fact on plan'

BY NICOLE WINFIELD

The Associated Press

CAMP AS SAYLIYAH, Qatar — The commander of the U.S. war in Iraq denied Sunday that he had asked the Pentagon for more troops before invading the country but sidestepped a question about whether the war might last into the summer.

Gen. Tommy Franks, speaking at a daily briefing of the U.S. Central Command in Qatar, was responding to published reports that the requests of U.S. generals for more ground troops were repeatedly denied by Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld. Reports also quoted U.S. military officials as saying the lack of troops and weapons meant the war might last into the summer.

"One never knows how long a war will take," Franks said.

He stressed that there had been no new deployment orders since the start of the war — an indication, he said, that he had sufficient troops.

Speaking with marked emphasis, Franks ticked off nine successes of coalition forces since the beginning of the war, starting with securing southern oil fields.

"The Air Force has worked 24 hours a day across every square foot of Iraq, and every day the regime loses more of its military capability," Franks said.

He said ground troops had attacked to within 60 miles of Baghdad "on multiple fronts" and that air operations were using "a number" of seized Iraqi airfields.

Obviously responding to growing public questions

about the U.S. preparation for the war in light of strong resistance met by forces in south and central Iraq, Franks appeared angry at the start of the briefing.

"We're in fact on plan. And where we stand today is not, in my view, only acceptable, but truly remarkable," he said.

Franks also rejected reports that his forces had engaged in an "operational pause" near the gates of Baghdad, stalled by supply problems and unable to press forward because of stiffer-than-expected resistance.

"There have been some pundits who have indicated we may be in an operational pause," Franks said. "This simply is not the case."

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Latest developments

■ An attacker drove a truck into a group of people at the U.S. base at Udairi, Kuwait, injuring about 6.

■ British military officials said a general from Saddam Hussein's army was captured in southern Iraq and was being pressed to provide strategic information. Group Capt. Al Lockwood, a British spokesman, said the general was captured in Basra and is the highest-ranking Iraqi prisoner of war so far.

■ Army Gen. Tommy Franks, commander of the coalition, denied that he asked the Pentagon for more troops before invading Iraq. He was responding to published reports that the requests of U.S. generals for more ground troops were repeatedly denied by U.S. Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld.

■ An Iraqi defense official said more than 4,000 volunteers have come from numerous Arab countries to participate in suicide attacks "against the invaders."

■ The U.S. Central Command said the latest targets in Baghdad hit by coalition aircraft included military facilities at the Abu Garayb Presidential Palace, the Karada military intelligence complex and the barracks of a paramilitary training center. U.S. and British warplanes also launched bombing raids near the south-central town of Karbala, targeting Iraqi fuel storage depots.

■ In central Iraq, thousands of Marines pushed north Sunday in "seek and destroy" missions. Marine infantry and tank units moved into previously unsecured areas, seeking to provoke attacks to locate Iraqi fighters.

■ Iraqi television reported that the suicide attacker responsible for killing four American soldiers was posthumously promoted to colonel and awarded two medals by Saddam Hussein. His family reportedly was awarded \$34,000.

■ In the north, Kurdish militiamen opposed to Saddam joined U.S. special forces in an attack on Islamic militants and advanced unopposed toward the government-held city of Kirkuk and its oil fields. One Kurdish official said at least 120 extremists linked to Ansar al-Islam were killed. The groups are said to have ties to al-Qaida.

■ The Arab satellite television channel Al-Jazeera reported a 90-minute exchange of tank and artillery fire near a bridge on Basra's western edge. British troops have encircled the city, which is defended primarily by pro-Saddam paramilitary fighters.

■ A U.S. soldier suspected of a deadly grenade attack on his own comrades in Kuwait is back in the United States. Army officials said Hasan Akbar, 32, arrived on Friday. A military judge found probable cause that Akbar committed the attack, but he still not been formally charged with any offense.

From The Associated Press

Plan

Continued from Page 1

He stressed that the timeline of his war plan was his own, and explained that he started the war when he did because he saw evidence that the Baghdad leadership intended to destroy its southern oil fields.

He said his plan's chief characteristic was flexibility and adaptability. "It gives us the way and the force to respond to opportunities we see," he said.

He called Saturday's suicide attack on an Army outpost in central Iraq "a pure means of terrorism," more so because the Iraqi leadership endorsed the attack, honored the bomber and called suicide bombings "routine military policy."

Jim Wilkinson, the spokesman at U.S. Central Command, said the regime's endorsement of the tactics "amounts to nothing less than state-sponsored terrorism."

Franks said the Iraqi people understood the care coalition forces were taking to avoid harming civilians and said, "the people of Iraq will welcome their liberation, to be sure."

When asked whether the Iraqi leader had survived the attacks, Franks said he did not know but added that he hadn't seen "credible evidence" over recent days that the regime was being controlled from the top.

Franks said the coalition had achieved air and ground freedom of action in western Iraq, and had secured the coastline, clearing the way for humanitarian aid shipments to begin.

He said coalition forces had also destroyed a massive terrorist facility in northern Iraq. At least 120 militants were killed in the attack on Ansar al-Islam, an extremist group suspected of being linked to the al-Qaida network.

He also said Iraqis opposed to Saddam were working with coalition forces, notably in Nasiriyah, where they provided records on ruling Baath party officials. He did not elaborate.

Franks was asked again about civilian casualties in Baghdad as a result of coalition bomb and missile attacks. He did not directly address the question, saying instead, "This is an incredible, precise operation."

News tracker: What's new with old news

States

Payoff from the Big Dig: Boston's Big Dig took a step closer to completion Saturday, as officials of the giant transportation project officially opened part of the tunnel that will allow drivers to drive beneath the city on their way north.

A simple ribbon cutting ceremony marked the largest, and perhaps most important, opening in the \$1.4-billion project to date: the northbound lanes of the 1.5 mile tunnel below central Boston and the northbound section of the Leonard P. Zakim Bunker Hill Bridge.

The Big Dig, officially known as the Central Artery/Third Harbor Tunnel Project, is about 75 percent complete. The project is burying Interstate 93 beneath Boston.

Bill of Rights tussle: A Connecticut antiques dealer will fight to recover a document seized from him that North Carolina claims is its long-lost copy of the Bill of Rights, his attorney said Friday.

Hugh Stevens, attorney for Wayne Pratt, disputed federal and state authorities' contention that the document is the one stolen from the North Carolina statehouse during the Civil War.

On March 18, FBI agents seized the document claimed by Pratt, a guest appraiser on the PBS program "Antiques Roadshow," after a sting in which an undercover agent posed as a philanthropist interested in buying the document for a Philadelphia museum.

Arctic drilling: Rebuffed by the Senate, the Bush administration will not give up the fight this year to open an Alaska wildlife refuge to oil drilling, Interior Secretary Gale Norton said Saturday.

The White House is turning its attention to the House in hopes of salvaging a key part of the president's energy strategy.

Republicans fell two votes shy in the Senate of passing the legislation that could lead to removal of a 43-year-old ban on developing millions of barrels of oil from the coastal plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

Flu-like illness: U.S. health officials said Saturday that none of the antiviral drugs and other treatments they have tested is effective against a flu-like disease that has killed at least 54 people and sickened nearly 1,500 others around the world.

They also expanded their travel advisory, suggesting that anyone planning nonessential travel to mainland China, Hong Kong, Singapore or Hanoi, Vietnam, "may wish to postpone their trips until further notice."

Mother in jail: The woman whose 7-year-old son was found dead in the same basement where two other sons were found starving has been sentenced to four years in prison for violating probation.

Melinda Williams had been on probation after being convicted of child endangerment in 1997 for injuring a child she was baby-sitting.

The charges are unrelated to the treatment of her own children, whom Williams had left with a cousin, Sherry Murphy, while she was in jail.

Business

US Airways out of bankruptcy: Like a jet plane taking off in a blizzard, US Airways emerges Monday from an eight-month stay in bankruptcy during a time of unprecedented turbulence in the airline industry.

The airline's speedy emergence from bankruptcy amazed experts who predicted that a reorganization would take much longer. But its sprint out of Chapter 11 protection is concluding in the midst of a war that threatens to devastate the entire industry.

The nation's seventh-largest airline believes it has a plan that will enable it to turn a profit as soon as 2004, despite the fact that it has lost \$3.8 billion over the last two years.

Tentative labor agreements at American: American Airlines reached tentative agreements with several small labor groups Saturday, and the leader of one of the largest labor groups warned workers that they will face deeper wage and benefit cuts if the carrier files for bankruptcy.

American says it must cut its labor costs by \$1.8 billion per year to avoid bankruptcy. Groups representing about 2,250 employees reached tentative agreement on cuts Saturday, but talks were continuing with the three most powerful employee groups — pilots, flight attendants and mechanics.

War on terrorism

Afghanistan aid: Pakistan will give Afghanistan \$100 million in grants over the next five years to help rebuild the war-ravaged nation's transportation network and boost bilateral ties, finance officials said Sunday.

The first installment of \$20 million, due in July, is largely earmarked to reconstruct the road from the eastern Afghan city of Jalalabad to Torkam, said Finance Minister Ashraf Ghani.

Pakistan has been quietly working to repair relations with Afghanistan since the anti-Taliban Northern Alliance, Pakistan's former nemesis, seized Kabul in a U.S.-led war in 2001.

Trade Center aftermath: Eighteen months after the World Trade Center was destroyed in New York City, several surrounding office buildings are still closed and the future of the largest remains uncertain.

The 40-story Deutsche Bank tower just south of the trade center site has been cleared of a mold that infested it for months after the attack, but its owners have not decided whether to raze or repair it. Other buildings, such as the Post Office at 90 Church St. just north of the site, are still being cleaned and overhauled in preparation for reopening.

According to Tenantwise.com, an online commercial real estate firm, nine of the 23 large office buildings damaged in the Sept. 11, 2001, attack are still closed.

Kuwait blast: Two people were treated for minor injuries after a low-flying Iraqi missile screamed across the Persian Gulf early Saturday, avoiding the detection of U.S. defense systems and landing just off the coast of Kuwait City, shattering windows at a popular seaside shopping mall.

The incident marked the closest a missile has come to the Kuwaiti capital since U.S. troops based in the Persian Gulf emirate invaded neighboring Iraq on March 20.

Casualties investigated: The U.S. Central Command said Saturday that it was trying to determine if nine Marines were killed by Iraqi or U.S. fire six days earlier.

A spokesman, Navy Lt. Cmdr. Charles Owens, said every reasonable possibility was being investigated.

The Command said it had no confirmation of a report that one of the Marines in the incident was missing or had been captured and displayed by Iraqis.

Syria relations: America's accusation that Syria is supplying military equipment to Iraq and Syria's swift and angry denial signal a sharp deterioration in relations between the two countries following what appears to have been a short-lived rapprochement, analysts said Saturday.

The accusation by U.S. Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld — which included a stern warning for Syria to stop smuggling such aid through its border — was some of the strongest language used in years against Syria, a country on the U.S. State Department's list of countries that sponsor terrorism.

World

Meeting discusses North Korea: Japan and South Korea's foreign ministers met Sunday to discuss growing tensions over North Korea's suspected nuclear weapons program, the Japanese Foreign Ministry said.

Foreign Minister Yoriko Kawaguchi met with her South Korean counterpart, Yoon Young-kwan, to reconfirm their commitment to defusing the crisis peacefully in cooperation with the United States, a ministry spokesman said on condition of anonymity.

Regional powers have been watching the communist country closely for signs that it may test a long-range missile or reprocess spent nuclear fuel to build atomic bombs.

Philippines, guerrillas to renew talks: Government negotiators and Muslim separatist guerrillas said Sunday they have agreed to work toward resuming stalled peace talks and halting fighting which has raged in recent weeks.

The Moro Islamic Liberation Front guerrillas broke off all contact with government peace negotiators after losing a major stronghold in a government military offensive last month.

Arrest warrants have been issued against rebel leaders over a March 4 bomb explosion that killed 21 people outside southern Davao city's airport.

Ivory Coast unrest: Government troops and armed looters battled at a village in Ivory Coast's lawless western border region, killing one civilian and wounding 19 others, the rebellion-split nation's officials said Sunday.

Late Saturday afternoon, soldiers in the former French colony attacked and chased off an unspecified number of English-speaking fighters who were looting the village of Guiebeli, near Ivory Coast's border with Liberia, said Ivory Coast's Lt. Col. Philippe Mangou.

No soldiers or looters were known to be injured during the fight, but one female civilian was killed and 19 others injured, Mangou said. No arrests were made, he said.

Palestinian Cabinet: The new Palestinian prime minister visited the Gaza Strip on Saturday for the first time since his appointment, meeting leaders of Yasser Arafat's Fatah movement as he works to form a Cabinet.

Fatah members declined to give details about their meeting with Prime Minister Mahmoud Abbas, but Abbas has been consulting with Palestinian leaders about the new Cabinet.

From The Associated Press

Updates from around the war

Rumsfeld: Fiercest fighting to come

WASHINGTON — The fiercest fighting and gravest danger lie ahead for U.S. troops as they advance toward Baghdad, and the Pentagon's plan will result in victory, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld said Sunday.

While he said he did not know when the war might be over, "It's going to end with the Iraqis liberated," Rumsfeld said in between appearances on the morning talk shows.

He acknowledged that resistance "has been in pockets quite stiff. It's going to get more difficult as we move closer to Baghdad," where President Saddam Hussein's most trusted and battle-tested Republican Guards are waiting.

"I would suspect that the most dangerous and difficult days are still ahead of us," he said.

Rumsfeld denied published reports that he had rejected requests from U.S. war planners for additional troops.

"The planners are in the Central Command. They come up with their proposals and I think you'll find that if you ask anyone who's been involved in the process from the Central Command that every single thing they've requested has in fact happened," Rumsfeld told "Fox News Sunday."

The plan developed by Gen. Tommy Franks is "a good one and it's working. I think the people who are talking about it really are people who haven't seen it," the defense secretary said.

The military has moved to shore up protections at U.S. checkpoints and other sites after a suicide bomber posing as a taxi driver asked American troops for help and then blew up his vehicle Saturday, killing himself and four soldiers.

Iraq's vice president warned suicide attacks would become routine.

"A terrorist can attack at any time at any place using any technique," Rumsfeld said. "So there's no question but that a terrorist that's willing to die can kill other people. ... Is it going to change the outcome? Not a chance."

Some troops injured in truck crash

KUWAIT CITY, Kuwait — A small number of U.S. troops were injured Sunday when an unidentified man drove a pickup into a crowd waiting to shop at the field exchange at Camp Udairi.

About six troops were hurt and are being treated, according to Air Force Lt. Col. Larry Cox, a military spokesman.

Cox said information still was being gathered, but that shots were fired after the crash about 12:50 p.m. local time. The driver was apprehended.

Cox did not know if the driver had been injured in the crash or the subsequent gunfire. Several of the injured Americans were treated at the scene.

Military officials said the man driving the small truck was not American or Kuwaiti, but a "third-country national."

More than half of the people in Kuwait are foreign workers, many from the Philippines, India, Bangladesh and other Middle Eastern countries.

U.S. sorry for friendly fire deaths

LONDON — The Pentagon's top general expressed regret Sunday for the deaths of British troops killed by American "friendly fire" in the Iraq war and said work is under way to prevent such mistakes.

"It's the absolute saddest tragedy that any of us can experience," Air Force Gen. Richard Myers, the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff chairman, told British Broadcasting Corp. television. "There is simply no excuse for that."

"I suppose in the middle of war, which is by nature a very chaotic event, at certain times on the battlefield those things happen," he said. "But I don't ever accept that they're inevitable, and I don't think we should ever stop trying to find means to prevent that from happening."

Two British airmen died when a U.S. Patriot missile battery shot down their Tornado jet near the Iraqi border with Kuwait a week ago.

"I regret the lives of the crew of the Tornado that was engaged by the Patriot system, and I think we have had another friendly fire incident since then," Myers said.

3 die in copter crash in Iraq

SOUTHERN IRAQ — A Marine UH-1 Huey helicopter crashed at a forward supply and refueling point in southern Iraq on Sunday, killing three people aboard, the U.S. military said.

The cause of the 8:30 p.m. local time crash was unclear.

One person was wounded, said a spokesman, 1st Lt. John Niemann, in Kuwait.

It was unclear if all four casualties were Marines. Only four people were believed to be aboard the helicopter, which had been taking off on a support mission.

Suicide bomber family's rewarded

IN THE IRAQI DESERT — Saddam Hussein handsomely rewarded the army officer who targeted U.S. forces in a suicide bombing, honoring him with a posthumous promotion, two new medals and a huge financial windfall for his family.

Calling the tactic a "routine military policy," Saddam's regime threatened more such attacks on Americans and Britons — even on their own soil.

The bomber — identified as Ali Jaafar al-Noamani, a noncommissioned officer with several children — was posthumously promoted to colonel and awarded two medals, state TV reported. His family reportedly was awarded 100 million dinars — the equivalent of \$34,000, a fortune in Iraq.

More taken to Landstuhl

LANDSTUHL, Germany — Eight more U.S. soldiers wounded in battle in Iraq arrived Sunday in Germany for treatment at a military hospital, a military spokesman said.

The soldiers arrived at the Ramstein Air Base aboard a C-141 transport plane, along with one U.S. civilian wounded in battle and 11 soldiers suffering from non-combat-related injuries.

All were taken to the nearby Landstuhl Regional Medical Center and were in a stable condition, said a spokesman for the U.S. European Command.

The three Army soldiers and five Marines brought to around 50 the number of military personnel transported to Landstuhl so far with combat injuries.

Troops attacked by Turkish civilians

About a dozen U.S. troops trying to recover an errant Navy cruise missile Saturday were attacked by a mob of angry villagers in eastern Turkey near the Iraqi and Syrian borders.

Hurling eggs and rocks, the mob broke the windshields of four Humvees and injured one U.S. servicemember, said Cmdr. Ike Skelton, a spokesman for U.S. forces in Turkey.

"He was treated on the scene and they continued their mission," said Skelton.

Although he declined to say which U.S. units were involved, Skelton said the contingent consisted of "mostly Air Force and Navy" troops dispatched from Incirlik Air Base to hunt down a sea-launched Tomahawk missile bound for Iraq that had crashed while flying through Turkey.

The Tomahawk was the third to go astray in Turkey in less than a week, prompting "a mutual agreement" to halt such flights through Turkish airspace, said a U.S. diplomatic official in the region.

None of the missiles have exploded, and there have been no reported injuries. The missiles are fired from warships and submarines and have a range of nearly 1,000 miles.

On Saturday afternoon as U.S. troops tried to collect the pieces of the fallen Tomahawk — which had broken apart in a farm field — they were attacked by about 75 local villagers in the Arab-dominated city of Sanliurfa, just north of Syria and along Turkey's main road to the Iraqi border.

The villagers were eventually pushed back by Turkish paramilitary units, according to officials and local media reports.

FDA approves lotion for chem attack

WASHINGTON — The government has approved a special skin lotion for U.S. soldiers to apply immediately after a chemical attack to neutralize otherwise potentially deadly weapons.

A lotion-soaked sponge is packaged in a special foil pouch that soldiers can carry, ready to rip open and wipe on any exposed skin as soon as possible after exposure to a chemical attack, the Food and Drug Administration said Friday.

"If used in time, this lotion can help prevent the serious burns and deaths that result from exposure to chemical warfare agents," said FDA Commissioner Mark McClellan.

The lotion is called RSDL, for "reactive skin decon-

tamination lotion." It is made by a Canadian company, O'Dell Engineering Ltd., and has been used for years by the Canadian military.

Some chemical weapons kill not just if they're inhaled but if they're absorbed through the skin. Immediately washing exposed skin, with soap and water or with different agents that target particular chemicals, is crucial to decontamination.

The FDA based its approval on U.S. Army tests that exposed laboratory animals to chemical-warfare agents and compared the resulting skin damage after treatment with either RSDL or other antidotes the Army already uses.

RSDL proved "far superior," McClellan said. "Most if not all of the damage associated with the agent was eliminated."

While it worked best if applied within minutes of exposure, before the chemical penetrated below the skin's surface, it did offer some protection if that absorption had begun, he said.

Additional Army studies found the lotion safe when applied to the skin of 300 people.

O'Dell said its RSDL lotion rapidly covers exposed skin and mixes with a broad range of chemical warfare agents, including sarin, VX and mustard, to break them down. The FDA said it also works against a fungal toxin.

RSDL leaves a nontoxic residue that can be washed off later.

An Army spokesman did not return calls seeking comment about how widely the military would use RSDL, which had been available to troops on an experimental basis until now.

MREs: Food to diet for?

One of the great advantages the U.S. military is touting in the current Gulf War is improvements in its field rations, known as MREs, or Meals-Ready-to-Eat.

Dismissed by troops in the 1991 Persian Gulf War as "Meals Rejected by Everybody," the new and improved MREs range from jambalaya to pasta alfredo and meatloaf.

The size of a paperback, they are packaged in foil and can be heated in 15 minutes or less by placing them in a bag with water that activates a chemical heating strip. The hot main course is supplemented by side dishes, dessert and packets of instant coffee or tea — used only by the hardest-core caffeine addicts since they must be mixed with cold water.

Most troops agree that MREs, introduced in the 1980s, are an improvement over the old C-rations.

But many offerings, including beef with mushrooms and Thai chicken, are routinely likened to the desert sand for texture and taste. The chocolate pound cake is considered second to the M-16 as a reliable hand weapon. A tube of Jalapeno cheese spread, however, is "gold," particularly for smearing on a black-bean burrito or hamburger. That makes it a hot trading item — worth perhaps two pineapple pound cakes or even a chocolate shake mix. Equally coveted is cocoa powder, which can be mixed with crackers, peanut butter and water to make pudding.

MREs have generated superstition as well as bartering. In Golf Company, 2nd Battalion, finding green chewing gum in your MRE means your wife is cheating on you. If you get two Tootsie-Rolls and don't give one away, chances are you'll die.

If you eat the Charms, packets of hard candy, "it'll rain," explains Cpl. Ryan Eman, 22, of Michigan.

When Golf Company pulled out of a camp one recent night after a rain storm, piles of unopened Charms littered both sides of the highway.

Iraq gets \$8 million in aid from U.S.

WASHINGTON — The government is giving an \$8 million grant to the United Nations Children's Fund to pay for water, health care and sanitation systems in Iraq.

The one-year grant is part of the government's plan for rebuilding Iraq after the war, but it also will finance current humanitarian efforts, Andrew Natsios, administrator of the U.S. Agency for International Development, said Friday.

The money also will cover the cost of medicines, vaccines, and micronutrients. UNICEF will target Iraqis who are the most vulnerable, particularly women and children.

Officials estimate that one-third of all children in the southern and central regions of Iraq suffer from malnutrition.

So far, USAID has sent 610,000 tons of wheat, rice and other food valued at \$300 million to feed the people of Iraq. The agency says it is also spending \$206.4 million on humanitarian relief with more money on the way.

From staff and wire reports

Unbustable bunker

BERLIN — A German trained as a civil defense engineer said Sunday he helped a company design a bunker under Saddam Hussein's Baghdad palace in the early 1980s that is likely to withstand even the newest non-nuclear bombs.

Karl Esser said that the shelter was also built to survive, from 650 feet away, a nuclear blast from a bomb like the one dropped at Hiroshima, and temperatures of more than 570 degrees Fahrenheit.

"It's very, very difficult to crack unless you hit it directly with a small atomic bomb," he said.

The bunker under the presidential palace near the Tigris River is believed to have survived the 1990-91 Gulf War. Since then, the United States has developed precision-guided "bunker-busting" bombs designed to penetrate deep into such reinforced concrete shelters.

But Esser said he doubts they can breach the bunker, which has a ceiling up to 6½ feet thick and two exit tunnels, and was designed to Western military standards. "Normally such bunkers can only be taken by ground troops," he said.

The shelter was completed in 1984 and cost about \$60 million, he said.

Esser said he did not supervise the actual construction and never saw the finished shelter. He said he met Saddam in spring 1984 when he was invited to Baghdad around the time the bunker was completed to brief Iraqi officials on its technical details.

Saddam, concerned for decades about attempts to kill him by enemies at home and abroad, is known to have hidden bunkers and underground tunnels scattered throughout Iraq.

Esser said he still has the bunker's plans, but no authorities have asked to see them or questioned him.

From The Associated Press

2 troops killed in Afghan ambush

BY JAMEY KEATEN

The Associated Press

BAGRAM, Afghanistan — The U.S. military said Sunday it is considering a wider offensive to root out terror groups in Afghanistan after an ambush by suspected Taliban rebels that killed two U.S. special forces soldiers and injured another.

The attack in the southern province of Helmand on Saturday was the sign of an "uptick" in rebel activity following the start of the Iraq war about 10 days ago, said U.S. Army spokesman Col. Roger King. He said U.S. forces would not let up in their efforts to hunt down rebel fighters.

"This helps paint the picture for future operations," King told reporters. However, the attack also "points out that it's a challenge to pick out enemy forces that are made up of local Afghans."

King said earlier that the U.S. military would try to find those responsible, but would not elaborate.

Three Afghan soldiers also were wounded in the attack, the first fatal encounter for U.S. forces in Afghanistan since December. It occurred two days after a Swiss International Red Cross worker was killed in neighboring Kandahar province.

King said it was not clear whether there was any link between the two attacks, but U.S. forces and Afghan militia forces have been carrying out a new offensive against terror groups in Kandahar province — and such offensives often spur more rebel activity.

"If we take aggressive, offensive actions, often times we get a reaction from the enemy forces," King said at Bagram air base north of the capital, Kabul, and the headquarters of the U.S.-led coalition fighting terrorism in Afghanistan.

Hundreds of Afghan soldiers and U.S. special forces were scouring a rugged mountainous region in Kandahar on Sunday, according to Khalid Pashtoon, a spokesman for the provincial governor.

Pashtoon said eight rebels had been killed and 13 captured in two days of fighting, including a suspected senior Taliban leader. He declined to give the suspects' names.

There have also been stepped up rocket attacks on U.S. bases in recent weeks, although the weapons rarely hit their mark and have caused no U.S. casualties. King has repeatedly said rebel forces had vowed to use the start of an Iraq war as a trigger for new attacks in Afghanistan.

Afghan authorities say Taliban, their al-Qaida allies and loyalists of renegade rebel commander Gulbuddin Hekmatyar are behind the killings and the rocket attacks.

In one such attack late Saturday, suspected Taliban and al-Qaida fighters launched rockets at an air base housing U.S. and Afghan forces near the eastern city of Jalalabad, but there were no casualties, said Dr. Mohammed Asif Qazizada, a deputy governor of the region.

In recent interviews with The Associated Press, Taliban loyalists in hiding in neighboring Pakistan said training

camps had been set up in the mountains of Afghanistan, and that anti-American forces had united.

In Saturday's ambush, a U.S. Special Forces soldier and an airman were killed and another special forces trooper wounded when their four-vehicle convoy was ambushed on a reconnaissance patrol 12-18 miles north of Geresk, King said.

The injured soldier was in critical but stable condition and had undergone surgery in the southern city of Kandahar. King did not identify the victims.

Geresk is in Helmand province, about 70 miles west of the city of Kandahar. The U.S. military had recently finished an anti-terror sweep known as Operation Viper in the area.

Saturday's ambush "only shows that our intelligence that there were enemy forces in the area, which led us to go into Helmand valley, was probably correct," King said, referring to the operation.

Dad Mohammed Khan, the intelligence chief of Helmand, told AP the U.S. soldiers had been inspecting the construction of a school and a hospital that the Americans were funding when they were ambushed by four men riding two motorcycles. King said he was not able to confirm that.

Khan identified the assailants as fighters of the Taliban regime, which was ousted by a U.S.-led coalition in late 2001. He did not explain how he knew they were Taliban.

The attack raised to 28 the number of combat deaths among the U.S.-led multinational coalition fighting terror in Afghanistan, King said. Another 34 have died in accidents or from other causes.

Suicide bombing riles Fort Stewart

BY RUSS BYNUM

The Associated Press

HINESVILLE, Ga. — Soldiers' wives cheered and waved flags to a cacophony of passing car horns Saturday, using pumped-up patriotism to drown out their shock from the latest news from Iraq.

Just hours before the 200 women gathered for the pro-troop rally, four soldiers from neighboring Fort Stewart were killed by an Iraqi suicide bomb attack.

"It's not the deaths, it's the way it was done," said Ellen Seider, a local print shop owner who spent the previous night helping Army wives stamp out buttons printed with photos of their husbands.

"Stuff like that is really scary," said Stephanie Nickson, who said the tactic shows Saddam Hussein will "do anything to harm us." She had spray painted a bed sheet with a message sending love to her deployed husband, Sgt. Ellis Nickson, an Army topography analyst.

Nickson, whose sleeveless Army T-shirt bared tattoos on both arms, is a former soldier herself who left the Army to raise two children. The suicide attack boosted her anger both at Iraq's tactics and at Americans still opposed to the war.

"Those who don't support us, they must be deaf and dumb," Nickson said "if that was your husband who got blown up, you might feel a bit different."

Fort Stewart has sent more than 15,000 soldiers of the Army's 3rd Infantry Division to fight in Iraq.

What had been a hopeful mood among their families and friends for a quick, decisive campaign turned somber as news of the first local combat casualties spread.

One soldier was killed Monday in an apparent sniper attack.

Another died Friday when his Bradley fighting vehicle crashed.

But the most shocking attack came Saturday when four soldiers of the 3rd Infantry's 1st Brigade stopped an Iraqi taxi at a highway check-

point north of the city of Najaf. The driver waved for help, and when the soldiers approached the cab exploded, Capt. Andrew Wallace told Associated Press Television News. The names of the four soldiers killed were not released.

Iraqi Vice President Taha Yassin Ramadan said Saturday that the driver was a noncommissioned military officer and warned: "This is just the beginning."

"These are dirty people. The tactics they used are dirty," said Julie Samples, whose husband, Sgt. Corey Samples, is an artillery soldier with the 3rd Infantry. "We go in there, we fight, then we feed them, we give them medicine and rebuild their cities. I know war is war, but we're the most humane nation there is."

At the Over Coffee Espresso Cafe, which has become a refuge for military spouses, the large-screen TV against the wall is tuned to a Christian music station rather than CNN, and photos of 69 deployed local soldiers are pinned to the wall.

One of the photos is of cafe owner Scott Mortensen's son-in-law, Spc. Cy Mullholland, a 3rd Infantry tank soldier.

With 3rd Infantry troops leading the push to Baghdad, Mortensen, a former Army instructor, said he worries Saddam wants to draw U.S. forces into the city before using weapons of mass destruction. He's also concerned that U.S. troops may have to reconsider the open hands they've extended to Iraqi civilians for fear they could be enemy soldiers in disguise.

"Just like in Vietnam, we might have to back off from what our hearts tell us is right as a civil society and realize we're dealing with an uncivilized individual," Mortensen said. "We're going to have to keep them at a farther distance and deal with them more firmly."

Spc. Kristi Streeto, 20, a 3rd Infantry tech supply soldier, watched her soldier husband go to Iraq while she stayed home after their daughter was born in January. But after Saturday's attack, Streeto was ready to join the fight herself.

"It makes me so mad. I do want to go and there's no way I can get over there," she said. "They don't fight fair, they don't fight by the rules. They have no feelings."

Lopsided casualty count loads U.S. hospital ship with wounded Iraqis

The Associated Press

ABOARD THE USNS COMFORT — Navy nurse Kimberlee Flannery came to the Persian Gulf expecting to help wounded Americans.

Instead, she has been caring mostly for injured enemy soldiers.

Flannery admits she was "very apprehensive" when her first Iraqi soldier came aboard this U.S. Navy hospital ship. But any misgivings she might have had quickly melted away.

"Then you see the pain and the agony of the people, and that whole mindset is erased," said the 23-year-old from Chillicothe, Ohio.

So far, the patient roster aboard the USNS Comfort, off the coast of Bahrain, has been the product of a lopsided casualty count in the war on Iraq.

Navy officials won't give out numbers, but doctors and nurses said the vast majority of patients are Iraqis, including soldiers.

Sr. Chief Petty Officer Bill Phillips, who works in the Comfort's "Casualty" ward emergency room, said the crew acts professionally, no matter whether the patient is friend or foe.

"Pretty much all these people have dedicated their lives to medicine — for them, it's the patient first," Phillips said.

"We're lifesavers here. A lot of these [Iraqis] didn't have the choice to fight against us, so we can't hold that against them."

Iraqi women and children are among the Comfort's patients, but most of the wounded there are young men in their late teens and 20s, an emergency room doctor said on condition of anonymity. But catching a glimpse of the Iraqi wounded is difficult.

Journalists are not permitted to see them, in part because interviewing prisoners of war is a violation of the Geneva Convention, said Lt. Byron Adams, the ship's lawyer.

On Friday, reporters were rushed out of the emergency room moments before some injured Iraqis arrived.

Painted white, with three red crosses on each side, the Comfort — one of the United States' two hospital ships — is the most sophisticated medical facility in the region. It includes 1,000 beds, 12 operating rooms, an intensive care unit and decontamination facilities in case of a chemical or nuclear attack.

Among the ship's 62 doctors — mostly Navy physicians from the National Naval Medical Center in Bethesda, Md. — are two neurosurgeons, a plastic surgeon and a pediatrician. Heart surgery and organ transplants are the only procedures that can't be performed on board.

U.S. hunts for Navy pilot downed in first Gulf War

BY WES SMITH

The Orlando Sentinel

ORLANDO, Fla. — Specially trained U.S. forces behind enemy lines in Iraq are searching for evidence regarding the fates or whereabouts of allied prisoners of war, including Jacksonville, Fla.-based Navy pilot Scott Speicher, whose F/A-18 fighter jet went down in the opening hours of the Persian Gulf War 12 years ago.

Speicher, initially thought killed in action Jan. 17, 1991, was reportedly seen alive on several recent occasions, including early this month by an informant near Baghdad, according to Amy Waters Yarsinske, a former U.S. Naval Reserve intelligence officer and expert on POWs and those missing in action.

Lt. Cmdr. James Brooks, a spokesman for the Defense Intelligence Agency, would not comment on Speicher's status. But he noted that special military units are in Iraq on a variety of missions, including searching for the Jacksonville pilot and father of two.

"Some of the missions and objectives in Operation Iraqi Freedom are to collect intelligence on Iraqi networks and on their illicit weapons of mass destruction. Determining a full accounting of Capt. Speicher, whether he is alive or dead, is also part of that mission," Brooks said.

U.S. Sen. Bill Nelson D-Fla., who has pushed for information on Speicher, said last week that he, too, thinks the Navy pilot is still alive, based on a recent intelligence briefing that included reports from defectors and European intelligence agencies.

"I believe he is still alive," Nelson said. "The question is: Can we find him and bring him home alive?"

Nelson said Speicher may have been seen in the custody of Iraqi authorities in the past month.

"I have talked to most of the military commanders, and I am convinced that Speicher is one of their top priorities as they go into Iraq," Nelson said. "They are looking for him."

Yarsinske, who spent eight years researching and writing a book about Speicher that alleges negligence in the military investigation of his disappearance, said there is other ample evidence of his survival.

In her book, "No One Left Behind," Yarsinske reported that U.N. weapons inspectors in Iraq in 1997 discovered medical records kept on Speicher. The inspectors, who could not legally seize the records, reported they showed the pilot had had at least two physicals and was in good health. An Iraqi defector confirmed that he also saw Speicher's medical reports, she said.

An attorney for Speicher's family said that family members would not discuss his case.

"Our goal is still to bring Scott home," Cindy A. Laquidara said.

Speicher flew off the carrier USS Saratoga for a bombing run over Iraq in the opening air assault of the Gulf War. Another F/A-18 Hornet pilot saw a flash and lost sight of Speicher's plane during heavy fighting. The pilot was thought to be the first casualty of the Gulf War.

About five years later, there were intelligence reports that his plane had crash-landed and that the pilot had ejected. Speicher's intact flight suit was found during a Red Cross mission in Iraq. The wreckage of his plane, which had been tampered with, was inspected by U.S. intelligence agents.

Based on that information and other intelligence reports that he had been seen alive and was being held captive, the Navy reclassified Speicher as missing in action in 2001. In October, his status was again changed to "missing in action, captured," which had the effect of declaring him to be a prisoner of war.

Iraqi officials have denied that the pilot was being held.

What a difference a week makes

BY STEVE LIEWER

Stars and Stripes

U.S. ARMY AVIATION BASE CAMP, Central Iraq — Fired-up and patriotic, the soldiers of Task Force 11th Aviation hoped to kick Saddam's butt in the war's first week.

According to V Corps' original battle script, the two Illsheim, Germany-based attack helicopter units would star in the war's opening night.

With a one-two punch, their Longbows and Apaches would knock out Iraqi army units in the southern part of the country, then jump north a few days later to put a hurt on the elite Republican Guard. By now, they would be knocking on Baghdad's door.

"We are the tip of the spear on that first night," Maj. Steve Wilson said shortly before the planned opening salvo March 20.

"There shouldn't be any need to attack [from the ground]. We are going to obliterate them," said Wilson, operations officer for the 2nd Squadron, 6th Cavalry Regiment, one of the 11th Aviation's units.

But fate and Mother Nature conspired against the Task Force. On Friday, the 2-6 Cavalry was still waiting impatiently for its first combat while its sister squadrons, the 6th Squadron, 6th Cavalry Regiment from Illsheim and the 1st Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment from Fort Hood, Texas, were fixing helicopters battered by ground fire in their first engagement. All pilots are alive, but two are in enemy hands.

Cocky bravado has given way to grim determination. The unit now knows it is in a tough scrap, and its leaders are thinking up new ways to win it.

"We're modifying our means and our capabilities," said task force commander Col. William Wolf, "so we can continue the fight."

The weather played havoc with the first night's battle plan. A dusty haze hung over the Camp Udairi airfield late Thursday evening as the 6-6 Cavalry pilots climbed into their aircraft. They were to strike the targets first from the west, followed a short time later by the 2-6 Cavalry hammer blow from the south.

Lt. Col. Mike Barbee, the 6-6 Cavalry's commanding officer, led the squadron across the border into Iraq, two UH-60

Black Hawks — one carrying Wolf, the other carrying the unit's operations officer — trailing behind to guide the battle.

Twenty-five minutes into the flight, the squadron ran into what Barbee later described as a "wall of crap." The dust grew so thick, he said, one of the Black Hawk pilots made an emergency maneuver and the other lagged far behind.

Barbee said the Apache pilots might have been able to continue through the fog, but he didn't think the Black Hawk pilots could because their night-vision systems aren't as good in such conditions. The memory of a Black Hawk crash last month that killed four members of the 5th Battalion, 158th Aviation Regiment during a sudden sandstorm stood fresh in his mind.

"It got kind of chaotic," Barbee said. "That's when I made the decision to turn around. It's a tough decision — a lot of frustration, but the right thing to do."

The decision irritated some 2-6 Cavalry pilots who saw their mission scrubbed before they even left the ground. But Wolf concurred with Barbee's decision to pull out.

"We got 'em all back safe," Wolf said. "That's all that really matters."

On Friday morning, six hours after the mission was scrubbed, all the soldiers in the Task Force except pilots, crew chiefs, and a skeleton staff of officers piled into trucks, tankers and Humvees.

The optimistic V Corps planners had expected the Task Force to move more than 1,000 soldiers over land to a patch of enemy-held desert deep inside Iraq, then get the camp running in time to support a Sunday-night attack.

But the convoy bogged down among the thousands of Army vehicles headed north on the country's sparse network of rude desert roads. The soldiers arrived just before dawn Monday, March 24, after 69 grueling hours. They had slept little since leaving Camp Udairi.

The Task Force pilots, though, were already there. They flew up Sunday night and landed in the sand only hours after the infantry had cleared the area.

They hunkered down around their helicopters, pilots pulling out their M-16 rifles and setting up posts in the open desert.

"There was nothing here — except us," said Chief Warrant Officer 4 Leonard Eichhorn, 42, of Stuart, Fla., a 2-6 Cavalry standardization instructor pilot. "We just rolled out our sleeping bags right on the rocks."

All three attack units had been prepped for an air assault Sunday night on the Medina Division of the Iraqi Republican Guard in the southern suburbs of Baghdad. Planners decided to send the 6-6 Cavalry and the 1-227 Aviation, keeping the 2-6 Cavalry in reserve for a later fight.

The two squadrons drew small-arms fire from the ground almost as soon as they left their camp, and it built as they neared urban areas.

For the 1-227 Aviation crews, the fire was bearable until they got near their targets.

"They didn't shoot at us going in. They waited until we were there," said Chief Warrant Officer 3 James Snyder, 32, of Belton, Texas, a 1-227 Aviation pilot. "Then the sky just lit up. There were tracer rounds all over."

The crews managed to destroy several armored vehicles before they retreated, but one Longbow was forced to land. The two pilots of the downed aircraft were taken prisoner.

The rest of the helicopters limped home. But nearly all of the Longbows from the two units received damage to body or systems from gunfire. One 6-6 Cavalry pilot suffered a minor neck injury from a bullet that pierced his cockpit.

The task force quickly made plans to ship spare parts from Camp Udairi to fix the birds.

Those plans fell apart when the three Chinook helicopters sling-loading the parts containers had to drop their cargo Monday after encountering ground fire 40 miles southeast of the camp.

Now, with the other two units busy fixing their aircraft, the 2-6 Cavalry is eager to get into the fight.

All week, they have been held as "911 birds": ready to go in an emergency. So far, they haven't been used.

"We've been sitting and waiting," said Maj. Carl Coffman, 38, of West Columbia, Texas, the unit's executive officer. "The squadron's spent six months here getting ready to go. We're just waiting for our number to be called."

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U.S. won't fight dirty, Air Force JAG says

BY LISA BURGESS

Stars and Stripes

ARLINGTON, Va. — The enemy may be fighting dirty in Iraq, but U.S. troops are going to stick to the internationally accepted laws of combat, and then some.

It's the American way, according to the Air Force's senior legal eagle.

Maj. Gen. Thomas Fiscus, Judge Advocate General of the Air Force, said that no matter how far the Iraqi paramilitaries may go in disguising themselves as civilians, using children as shields, and hiding in mosques and hospitals, U.S. servicemembers will never change the rules of engagement to match such dishonorable tactics.

"The way the United States fights is a little different from other people," Fiscus said Friday in his Pentagon office. "We have this document called the Constitution, and it governs everything we do in the United States — including the way the military fights."

By adding uniquely American concepts of human rights to the laws of armed conflict and Geneva Conventions adhered to by other civilized countries when they go to war, "we tend to restrict ourselves a lot more than the law requires," Fiscus said.

"It's just the way we see ourselves," he said. "We believe very much in trying not to inflict collateral damage."

But although engagement rules forbid U.S. troops from "fighting fire with fire" by adopting dubious guerrilla tactics, the ROE do not force American fighters to just sit there and take it when the enemy is pounding them, Fiscus said.

"It's important for our soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines to understand that under all laws of conflict, you always have the inherent right of self-defense," he said. "If you have a reason to believe you or your unit are being attacked or in jeopardy, you have the right to defend yourself."

Those calls can be very tricky, and each situation is different. That's why the U.S. military spends so much time working to convey ROE to the troops, who, understandably, tend to be "concerned about whether they can get in trouble for doing their job," Fiscus said.

The ROE issue falls under the military's Judge Advocate General's Corps, or JAGs.

JAGs are an essential element of any combat commander's staff, from the senior-most offices in the Pentagon all the way down to division, brigade and even battalion headquarters.

In the Air Force, for example, JAGs sit side-by-side with commanders in the air operations center, examining every target set in advance to make sure it is legally valid.

Laymen may regard military lawyers as deadweights whose sole purpose is to tie their commander's hands in the middle of a hard fight.

But that's not true, Fiscus said. "I don't think [a JAG] ties the commander's hands at all," Fiscus said. "The commanders truly want to do the right thing, and they want to obey the law."

Most experienced commanders understand that their JAGs are a boon, not a burden, Fiscus said.

A JAG's familiarity with the fine points of international law and the ROE means that the lawyer can come up with alternate courses of action that might not have occurred to the commander, he said.

"Unless we are convinced a commander is going to jail [if he sanctions a certain action], we are going to find a way to help him do what he wants to do," Fiscus said.

And sometimes, the JAGs are there to tell a commander that he has latitude to attack a target he might have assumed was off-limits.

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Academies uneven on sex scandals

BY ROBERT WELLER

The Associated Press

DENVER — America's three service academies all reluctantly brought women students into their elite, male-dominated world at the same time.

Yet 27 years later, while the Air Force Academy is mired in a scandal over the handling of sex assault accusations by women cadets, West Point and Annapolis have escaped criticism.

The Air Force this past week ousted the top brass and ordered a slate of changes in the way women are housed as assault accusations are investigated at the pine-clad campus in the Rocky Mountain foothills.

It also destroyed a symbol of academy culture Friday that has rankled female cadets and women's advocates since the campus went coed in 1976, chiseling raised letters off a stone arch that read "Bring Me Men."

Critics were guardedly positive about the changes, which included the appointment of two women officers among the academy's top four leaders.

"The thing that made a big difference at West Point and Annapolis was having senior women officers as role models," said Robert Kaufman, an attorney who has twice served on government panels overseeing gender issues in the military. "I think it is likely to change at the Air Force Academy, too."

In reality, procedures for dealing with assault accusations at the academy weren't that different from those at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point or the Naval Academy in Annapolis.

The three institutions have similar rules for dealing with women who report assaults and similar education programs on date rape and rape awareness.

The difference, according to insiders and advocates, lay in a refusal to accept change at the Air Force campus in Colorado Springs.

Statistics on assault cases at the schools are incomplete and difficult to compare.

West Point has had 15 reported cases, ranging from unwanted kissing to rape, since August 1999 — or about 4.3 per year. Ten of the 15 accused cadets resigned or were forced out of the academy, three received lesser punishments, one was cleared by DNA evidence and one case is pending.

Annapolis had 11 cases reported during the last three academic years, an average of 3.6 per year. Charges were substantiated in four cases, a finding that generally leads to expulsion, three are pending and three cadets apparently were cleared, based on the fragmentary information the institution provided.

The Air Force Academy says it has had 56 cases of sexual misconduct since 1993, an average of 5.6 per year. Six cadets have faced courts-martial during that time, resulting in five convictions. At least eight others were dismissed from the academy, and seven others were reprimanded after disciplinary hearings. Not all the cases involved cadets as victims.

Those figures don't reflect a central accusation in the Air Force scandal — that women cadets avoid reporting assaults for fear it will hurt their careers.

Sen. Wayne Allard, a Colorado Republican who has been pushing the Air Force for reform, says he's cautiously optimistic the changes announced this week will change a culture that he believes lags that at the other service academies.

Allard notes that media coverage of the scandal has prompted 50 women to contact his office about alleged assaults at the Air Force Academy, but has brought out just one alleged victim from the other academies to contact another senator's office.

"All I can say is that we are not getting out of the other academies the reports of rape and sexual assault that we are getting out of the Air Force Academy," Allard said.

In Colorado Springs, at least 38 female cadets sought help from the nearest civilian rape crisis center because they feared reporting to academy officials would jeopardize their careers.

In contrast, the civilian rape crisis center closest to West Point hasn't had any similar cases, said Lucille Rushing, director of crisis services for the Rape Survivor Advocacy Program in Goshen, N.Y.

Officials at the civilian rape crisis center nearest Annapolis declined to be interviewed. But the national Rape Abuse & Incest National Network checked and found no spike in cases at the center, said network spokeswoman Jamie Zueback.

It was a scandal in 1990 that prompted the Navy to crack down on harassment of women at Annapolis, said Kaufman.

Annapolis went to great lengths to control abuses after it became public that a female midshipman was chained to a urinal and photographed by male midshipmen after she threw a snowball at them.

"The Navy became so ashamed of themselves, they decided to try to be the best," said Kaufman.

The Army had a strong policy of equal treatment from the start, said Kaufman, who monitored the arrival of the first female cadets at West Point in 1976 while investigating a cheating scandal for President Ford.

When Army football players were caught groping female cadets in 1994, Kaufman said, it was the male cadets who reported the players. Commanders made it public and punished the offenders.

Kaufman, who focused on gender issues at the three academies when he served on Defense Department's Advisory Panel on Women from 1996 to 1999, said he never saw that kind of attitude shift at the Air Force Academy. When he objected to the "Bring Me Men" sign in 1999, he said, Air Force officials turned him aside.

"They said it was part of their tradition and would stay," Kaufman said. "That sign reflected an attitude that was present at Colorado Springs that I don't think was present at the other academies."

Lory Manning, a retired Navy officer who monitors the military for the Women's Research and Education Institute, recalls attending a conference in Colorado Springs as recently as 1998 and seeing faculty wearing hats branded "LCWB." The caps are an infamous badge of the graduating class of 1979, the abbreviation a crude anatomical reference to the "last class" that was all-male.

The scandal, she said, "is an outgrowth of a very sexist culture."

Bomb rocks Israeli mall

BY JASON KEYSER

The Associated Press

NETANYA, Israel — An Islamic militant blew himself up in a crowded pedestrian mall in the Israeli coast town of Netanya on Sunday, wounding 30 bystanders in the first such attack in nearly a month.

The Palestinian group Islamic Jihad said it dispatched the attacker, identifying him as a resident of the West Bank city of Nablus. His motive was not immediately known.

Israeli officials said that since the start of the U.S.-led offensive against Iraq 10 days ago, they have been on high alert for new bombings by Palestinian militants presumably eager to express support for Iraq.

However, Islamic Jihad and its sister group Hamas have said they want to stay out of other conflicts and focus on their confrontation with Israel. The two groups did not mention Iraq in their initial responses to Sunday's bombing.

The bomber set off explosives studded with nails shortly before 1 p.m. near Cafe London, a popular outdoor restaurant along Netanya's crowded pedestrian mall. A security guard kept the bomber from entering the cafe, and the man instead blew himself up near a group of soldiers standing outside, police and witnesses said.

"There was a huge explosion," said a worker at a nearby fish restaurant, who would only give his first name, Herzl. "I saw two soldiers thrown to the ground and the terrorist ripped to pieces at the entrance."

The attacker died and at least six of the wounded were in serious condition, hospital officials said.

In a telephone call to Islamic Jihad said the assailant was from Nablus' Old City, or casbah, but would not give his name.

Outside the cafe, chairs and tables were overturned, and the sidewalk was littered with torn clothing, broken plates and bits of flesh.

Israel's police minister, Tsahi Hanegbi, suggested the attack may have been linked to Iraq. "The [Palestinian] motivation to harm Israel and to help the Iraqi struggle is well known to us and it comes across in all the intelligence reports," said Israel's police minister, Tsahi Hanegbi.

Abdel Aziz Rantisi, a Hamas spokesman, did not mention Iraq, saying such bombings would continue until Israel withdraws from Palestinian lands. In the past 30 months of fighting, Hamas and Islamic Jihad have carried out scores of bombings, killing hundreds of Israelis.

Sunday's blast was the first suicide bombing since March 5, when 17 Israelis were killed in a bus blast in the northern port city of Haifa.

Sunday also marked Land Day, an annual day of marches and protests by Israel's Arab citizens against land confiscations.

Netanya, in northern Israel, has been a frequent target, in part because of its proximity to the West Bank. A Hamas bomber attacked a hotel in Netanya during the Passover Holiday a year ago, killing 29 people participating in a holiday meal.

Operation Northern Watch: Mission complete

BY TERRY BOYD

Stars and Stripes

The 12-year no-fly mission over northern Iraq that began just after the first Gulf War has ended with Operation Iraqi Freedom, throwing into question the fate of the largest U.S. military presence in Turkey.

The final Operation Northern Watch no-fly mission flew March 17, two days before the war began on March 19, said Maj. Bob Thompson, ONW spokesman at Incirlik Air Base in southeast Turkey.

The end of the no-fly mission frees up a full wing of aircraft for possible strikes against Iraq. They just won't attack from Turkey.

Aircraft and crews assigned to ONW are now leaving Incirlik, but Thompson declined to discuss their destinations.

About 50 U.S. Air Force and British Royal Air Force aircraft and about 1,400 people including pilots, maintainers and support personnel are either returning to home bases, or are redeploying to support the war in Iraq, Thompson said.

People are dispersing "fairly rapidly," he said. "This is the, no kidding, last act."

The end of the no-fly mission frees up F-15s from the 1st Fighter Wing at Langley Air Force Base in Virginia, F-16s from the Indiana National Guard's 113th Fighter Squadron from Terre Haute and from the 55th Fighter Squadron at Shaw Air Force Base, S.C., as well as Navy EA-6B electronic warfare planes, refuelers and AWAC planes.

Once the war began, the mission of protecting Kurds and other minorities in northern Iraq ended, Thompson said. The Turkish government, which controls Incirlik, is allowing U.S. aircraft to fly over Tur-

key, but refuses to allow the U.S. to launch offensive missions from Turkish soil.

It will take time for the units — including British Jaguar fighter-bombers and refuelers, to be completely gone, Thompson said. "This operation has been flying for 12 years, and it's a big footprint. It's going to take time to get sorted out."

Some ONW officers and capabilities will stay at Incirlik under a new command designation.

As the new Combined Air Forces North, the group will operate out of the former ONW combined air operations center, or CAOC, to coordinate coalition overflights into northern Iraq with the Turkish General Staff, which controls Incirlik.

What remains uncertain is how the end of ONW affects the perhaps 2,000 people assigned to the 39th Wing, the large Air Force support wing. Officials with the U.S. Air Forces in Europe officials did not respond to inquiries by Stripes' deadline.

While the 39th Wing has no aircraft, it does service aircraft transiting to American operations in Afghanistan and Central Asia.

The wing also has other responsibilities including wartime and contingency planning, weapons storage, housing, a hospital, communications and training. It has 21 tenant units, as well as separate operations in Izmir, Diyarbakir and other locations in Turkey.

ONW began in 1991 as Operation Provide Comfort, with British, U.S. and French planes keeping Saddam Hussein's aircraft from going north of the 36th Parallel and attacking Kurdish refugees fleeing the Gulf War. The French soon withdrew, and the mission was renamed Operation Northern Watch in 1997.

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Turkish hijacker surrenders

The Associated Press

ATHENS, Greece — A 20-year-old Turkish man who used fake dynamite and razor blades to hijack a Turkish Airlines flight was persuaded by Turkey's prime minister to release his 202 hostages after the plane landed in Athens.

Ozgur Gencarslan was arrested Saturday after Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Greek police negotiated the hostages' release after a five-hour standoff.

All the hostages were unharmed.

Erdogan telephoned the hijacker and urged him to surrender, according to Turkish Transportation Minister Binali Yildirim and conversations between the pilot and the Athens flight control tower broadcast on Greek television.

Gencarslan commandeered the plane — on a Turkish domestic flight between Istanbul and Ankara — reportedly because he was distraught with family problems.

Greek Police spokesman Lefteris Economou said Gencarslan was armed with three safety razors and pretended that a dozen candles were sticks of dynamite.

Rangers 3, Bruins 1

BOSTON — Alex Kovalev scored two goals as the New York Rangers helped their slim playoff hopes with a 3-1 victory over Boston on Saturday.

The Rangers, who spoiled Boston's bid to clinch a playoff berth, are four points behind the New York Islanders for the final playoff spot in the Eastern Conference. The Rangers have four games left, including one against the Islanders on Long Island Tuesday. The Is-

landers have five games remaining.

The Bruins, 2-1-2 since General Manager Mike O'Connell took over as interim coach after firing Robbie Forek on March 19, will earn a postseason berth with their next two points.

Brian Leetch had New York's other goal. Joe Thornton scored his 35th for Boston.

NHL

Red Wings 6, Blues 2

ST. LOUIS — Brett Hull's 33rd career hat trick lifted Detroit over St. Louis, spoiling Chris Pronger's return to the lineup.

Pronger scored in his first game back for St. Louis. The 2000 NHL MVP and Norris Trophy winner missed the first

77 games of the season while recovering from knee and wrist surgery.

Pavel Datsyuk, Nicklas Lidstrom and Sergei Fedorov also scored for the Red Wings, who have won 19 of 22 (19-2-0-1). Pronger was on the ice for five Detroit goals.

Tyson Nash scored the other St. Louis goal.

Hull, who also had an assist, leads the Red Wings with 36 goals.

Continued on Page 8

MIDWEST

Marquette 83, Kentucky 69

MINNEAPOLIS — Dwyane Wade sailed high above a defense that had carried Kentucky all season, slamming the ball through the hoop repeatedly in a stunning upset few people expected.

Led by Wade's dazzling performance, Marquette emphatically ended the Wildcats' 26-game winning streak with an 83-69 victory Saturday to earn a trip to the Final Four in New Orleans.

Cheered by a sea of yellow-clad followers, Marquette's surprising rout in the Midwest Regional final gave the school its third trip to the Final Four and first since 1977, when the late Al McGuire coached the team to the national championship.

If Wade keeps it up, the Golden Eagles might get another. He showed again why he's one of the nation's top players with a triple-double — 29 points, 11 rebounds and 11 assists.

Marquette (27-5) will play Kansas (29-7) in the national semifinals next Saturday at the Superdome in New Orleans.

Wade got plenty of help against Kentucky. Burly 6-foot-10 Robert Jackson had 24 points and 15 rebounds, and freshman Steve Novak hit five three-pointers and scored 16.

Marquette used a 35-12 run over the final 12 minutes of the first half to take a 45-26 lead.

Kentucky (32-4) pulled within 12 with 10:50 left and

NCAA

had a chance to cut it to 10. But after a great spinning move to the basket, Antwain Barbour was called for an offensive foul.

From there, Wade was too much for the Wildcats to handle. After Scott Merritt hit a jumper, Wade scored Marquette's next 11 points to put the victory away.

Kentucky gave up its most points since a 115-87 victory over Tennessee State on Dec. 30 that started the long winning streak.

The Wildcats hadn't lost since Dec. 28, against Louisville.

Kentucky's star guard, Keith Bogans, wore a protective brace on the left ankle he sprained in Thursday's semifinal victory over Wisconsin. He scored 15 points on 4-for-11 shooting in 24 minutes, but he was obviously slowed down by the injury.

WEST

Kansas 78, Arizona 75

ANAHEIM, Calif. — Kirk Hinrich went from his worst day to his best, taking the Jayhawks back to the Final Four.

Hinrich scored 28 points and blocked a three-point attempt by Jason Gardner in the final seconds to help Kansas hold off the Wildcats.

Hinrich, a miserable 1-for-9 for two points in Kansas' 69-65 victory over Duke in the regional semifinals, came out sharp in this game and wound up one point shy of his career high. He shot 10-for-23, including 6-for-17 from three-point range, and added five rebounds, five assists, two steals and two blocks.

The second block won't soon be forgotten in Kansas.

After the Jayhawks committed a shot-clock violation, the Wildcats took possession with 7.1 seconds remaining. Gardner let fly from about 25 feet to tie the game, but Hinrich slapped the ball away.

Arizona's Luke Walton grabbed it and fed the ball back to Gardner in the corner, but his second attempt missed as time expired.

Gardner scored 23 points to lead the Wildcats (28-4). Luke Walton had 18 points, 10 rebounds and six assists.

The loss was a tough one for Arizona and 68-year-old Hall of Fame coach Lute Olson, who remained stuck at 499 victories in his 20 seasons as leader of the Wildcats.

Kansas, meanwhile, got the 1,800th victory in team history — third-most in NCAA history. The Jayhawks will play in their 12th Final Four, the fourth in Roy Williams' 15 years as coach.

Williams has a 417-100 career record and his .807 winning percentage is the best among active coaches, but he's looking for his first national title.

From The Associated Press

FIGURE SKATING

WASHINGTON — Michelle Kwan, showing increased overall speed and a real burst of energy in her footwork, won the short program at the World Figure Skating Championships. She did it without a triple-triple combination, something Russia's Elena Sokolova hit in finishing second.

Sasha Cohen fell on her triple flip — for the first time in two years — and began a spiral series too late. She wound up fourth overall, fifth in the short program.

Japan's Fumie Suguri, who won the second qualifying group and was third at last year's worlds, was third overall.

Evgeni Plushenko won his second World Figure Skating Championships title, sweeping the judges to edge American Tim Goebel. Japan's Takeshi Honda was third, repeating his standing of a year ago, as did Goebel.

Earlier, Russia's Irina Lobacheva and Ilia Averbukh, the defending champions, edged Canada's Shae-Lynn Bourne and Victor Kraatz, in the original dance. Americans Tanith Belbin and Ben Agosto were seventh, one spot in front of five-time national champions Naomi Lang and Peter Tchernyshev.

FOOTBALL

MIAMI — Zach Thomas signed a five-year, \$33.75 million contract extension with the Miami Dolphins.

Thomas was entering the last year of the five-year, \$22.5 million contract he signed after the 1999 season.

Thomas, 29, earned his fourth straight Pro Bowl selection last season when he led the Dolphins in tackles for the second straight season with a career-high 195. Thomas has led Miami in tackles six times in his seven seasons.

Sports in brief

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. — The Jacksonville Jaguars re-signed running back Fred Taylor to a five-year, \$20 million contract, a few months after he produced the best season of his career.

Taylor ran for 1,314 yards and eight touchdowns last season after missing all but two games in 2001 with a groin injury. He holds 31 team records and is the franchise's only 1,000-yard rusher.

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — Free agent running back Mike Cloud has been suspended for the first four games of the 2003 season for violating the NFL's steroid policy.

Cloud is an unrestricted free agent who spent his first four seasons playing sparingly with the Kansas City Chiefs.

NFL spokesman Greg Aiello, citing the league's confidentiality policy, declined to comment on the specifics of the violation. The suspension, which dates to December, was recently upheld on appeal.

BASEBALL

NEW YORK — The YES Network and Cablevision walked away from their agreement, leaving 3 million homes without the New York Yankees on television for the start of a second straight season.

Each side blamed the other, alleging last-minute maneuvers to change the terms of a one-year agreement announced March 12.

PORT ST. LUCIE, Fla. — New York Mets coach Don Baylor has been diagnosed with cancer in his bone marrow but hopes the chemotherapy treatments won't cause him to miss any games.

Baylor, 53, will undergo four days of oral and intravenous chemotherapy beginning Tuesday — the day after the Mets open the season against Baylor's former team, the Chicago Cubs — to treat the multiple myeloma. The treatment will be repeated once every 28-to-36 days as initial therapy.

SURPRISE, Ariz. — The pilot of an Apache attack helicopter shot down over Iraq and taken prisoner is a relative of Texas Rangers catcher Todd Greene.

Chief Warrant Officer Ron Young, 27, is from the Army's 1st Battalion of the 227th Aviation Regiment out of Fort Hood, Texas.

Greene said he learned about Young's status during a game, after Texas Manager Buck Showalter pulled him out and told him to call his wife.

MINNEAPOLIS — The woman accusing Hall of Famer Kirby Puckett of sexual assault testified that she was terrified and tried to escape when he dragged her into a restaurant bathroom.

The woman was the first witness called by prosecutors as the trial opened for a former player who was once one of baseball's most popular figures.

Pausing several times and fighting back tears, she described an attack that began with Puckett grabbing her arm last September at about 12:30 a.m., tugging her toward the men's room.

SURPRISE, Ariz. — Kansas City Royals outfielder Carlos Beltran was placed on the 15-day disabled list because of a strained right oblique muscle.

Beltran has had at least 100 runs

scored and 100 RBIs the past two seasons for the Royals. With Beltran out, Michael Tucker will open the season in center field, while Brandon Berger and Dee Brown will split time in right field.

OLYMPICS

LONDON — IOC president Jacques Rogge refused to consider the new World Skating Federation's bid to replace the International Skating Union as the sport's world governing body.

Former Olympic champions Scott Hamilton, Dick Button, along with other prominent names in the sport, announced the breakaway federation on Tuesday at the World Figure Skating Championships in Washington.

COLLEGE BASKETBALL

ATHENS, Ga. — Georgia coach Jim Harrick resigned amid a scandal in the basketball program, then announced he was retiring.

Harrick was suspended with pay March 10 pending a joint investigation by the university, the NCAA and the Southeastern Conference into alleged academic fraud.

The scandal also cost his son a job as an assistant coach and prompted the school to ban the No. 25 Bulldogs (19-8) from playing in the SEC and NCAA tournaments.

Athletic director Vince Dooley said Harrick's attorney contacted school lawyers "within the last 24 hours" to communicate his desire to retire.

University officials said that under the agreement, Harrick will receive his remaining base pay, broadcast payments and a Nike payment, which total \$254,166. Had he served out the remainder of his contract, he would have been entitled to \$2.1 million.

From The Associated Press

Free soul for the troops

Soul superstar James Brown donated 400 tickets to military personnel for his concert in Houston.

Brown, 69, said the free tickets for Saturday night's concert were intended to give a boost to military workers as the U.S.-led war with Iraq continues.

"I grew up as a poor boy and was able to rise up and be an entertainer and help others," Brown said through a spokeswoman Friday. "I wanted to do what I could do to help our nation in this time of need."

Faces 'n' places

Letterman returning

David Letterman was to return to the Ed Sullivan Theater on Monday to host the "Late Show" now that he's recovered from an eye infection caused by shingles, CBS said.

The condition is a viral infection of the nerve roots that typically results in pain and rash. It's caused by the same virus that causes chickenpox.

Letterman, whose late-night talk show has featured a series of guest hosts since Feb. 26, will welcome comedian Billy Crystal and 18-year-old world whistling champion Michael Barimo as his guests on Monday.

From The Associated Press

NBA

76ers 110, Hawks 89

ATLANTA — Allen Iverson had 38 points, nine assists and eight steals as the Philadelphia 76ers defeated the Atlanta Hawks 110-89 Saturday night.

Iverson finished 17-for-25 from the floor, missing his only three-point attempt. He hit eight straight midrange jump shots before missing an 18-footer from the left baseline late in the second quarter.

Philadelphia took a 38-26 lead midway through the second quarter on Iverson's 22-footer, and the Sixers maintained a double-digit lead the rest of the way.

Glenn Robinson led Atlanta with 16 points on 5-for-18 shooting. Robinson committed seven of the Hawks' 17 turnovers.

Nets 109, Warriors 97

EAST RUTHERFORD, N.J. — Jason Kidd had 22 points, 13 assists, seven rebounds and five steals, and the Nets held Golden State to two baskets in the final 6:30.

The victory may have been costly, as power forward Kenyon Martin sprained his right knee on a drive to the basket in the third quarter. He is listed as day-to-day.

Coming off consecutive victories over the New York Knicks, New Jersey has put together its first three-game winning streak since the All-Star break.

Richard Jefferson added 22 points, Aaron Williams had 14 off the bench and Jason Collins had 13 — including nine of the Nets' final 12 points.

Celtics 110, Cavaliers 106

CLEVELAND — Paul Pierce scored 34 points and had a length-of-the-court assist late in the game to help the Boston Celtics hold off the Cavaliers.

Pierce hit six three-point shots as Boston shot 14-for-27 from beyond the arc, breaking a tie with Orlando for sixth place in the Eastern Conference.

Ricky Davis scored 38 for Cleveland, which lost to the Celtics for the second straight night and has lost 10 in a row overall against Boston. Cleveland had a three-game home winning streak snapped.

Walter McCarty shot 6-for-8 from beyond the arc and finished with 20 points, Walker scored 18 and Cleveland

native J.R. Bremer had 13 points for Boston.

Spurs 101, Jazz 81

SAN ANTONIO — Tim Duncan scored 30 points as San Antonio snapped Utah's six-game winning streak and defeated the Jazz for the 12th straight time.

The Spurs turned a close game into a romp with a 17-0 run beginning late in the third quarter. San Antonio led by as many as 31 in the fourth before the regulars went to the bench.

San Antonio, which has won 15 of 18, is now two games behind Midwest Division-leading Dallas with 10 games to play. Tony Parker scored 17 points and Bruce Bowen added 15 for the Spurs, shooting 4-for-7 from behind the three-point line.

Greg Ostertag led the Jazz with 16, tying his season high, and topped all rebounders with 10.

Kings 107, Bulls 92

CHICAGO — Peja Stojakovic scored 19 of his 27 points in the third quarter as the Sacramento Kings won their sixth in a row.

The victory lowered the Kings' magic number for winning the Pacific Division to three. Any combination of Sacramento victories and Portland losses totaling three will give Sacramento its second straight title.

Chris Webber had 21 points and 10 rebounds, and Mike Bibby added 16 points for Sacramento.

Eddy Curry led the Bulls with 24 points and 14 rebounds.

Rockets 102, Nuggets 89

HOUSTON — Steve Francis had 18 points and tied his season high with 12 assists as the Houston Rockets had seven players in double figures.

The Rockets led 81-68 at the start of the fourth quarter, but the Nuggets got the lead down to 89-85 with 3:36 to play. Maurice Taylor then hit a jumper, Francis scored on a fast break and Taylor added a three-point play for a 96-85 lead with 2:07 to go.

Taylor had nine of his 15 points in the fourth quarter. Kelvin Cato added 14 points and six blocked shots. Yao Ming had 11 points and two rebounds.

Marcus Camby led the Nuggets with 18 points and 15 rebounds.

From The Associated Press

Scores/standings

NBA

EASTERN CONFERENCE

Atlantic Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
x-New Jersey	45	28	.616	—
Philadelphia	43	29	.597	1½
Boston	40	34	.541	5½
Orlando	39	34	.534	6
Washington	34	38	.472	10½
New York	32	41	.438	13
Miami	23	50	.315	22

Central Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
x-Detroit	45	26	.634	—
Indiana	42	30	.583	3½
New Orleans	41	32	.562	5
Milwaukee	34	39	.466	12
Atlanta	29	45	.392	17½
Chicago	26	48	.351	20½
Toronto	22	49	.310	23
Cleveland	14	59	.192	32

WESTERN CONFERENCE

Midwest Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
x-Dallas	54	18	.750	—
x-San Antonio	52	20	.722	2
Minnesota	46	28	.622	9
Utah	43	30	.589	11½
Houston	38	35	.521	16½
Memphis	26	46	.361	28
Denver	16	57	.219	38½

Pacific Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
x-Sacramento	52	21	.712	—
Portland	45	27	.625	6½
L.A. Lakers	42	30	.583	9½
Phoenix	38	34	.528	13½
Golden State	36	38	.486	16½
Seattle	34	37	.479	17
L.A. Clippers	22	50	.306	29½

x-clinched playoff spot

Saturday's games

Philadelphia 110, Atlanta 89
New Jersey 109, Golden State 97
Boston 110, Cleveland 106
Sacramento 107, Chicago 92
San Antonio 101, Utah 81
Houston 102, Denver 89

NCAA Tournament

MIDWEST REGIONAL

Championship

At The Hubert H. Humphrey Metro-

dome

Minneapolis

Saturday

Marquette 83, Kentucky 69

WEST REGIONAL

Championship

At Arrowhead Pond

Anaheim, Calif.

Saturday

Kansas 78, Arizona 75

NHL

All Times EST
EASTERN CONFERENCE

Atlantic Division

	W	L	T	OT	Pts	GF	GA
x-New Jersey	44	20	8	5	101	203	159
x-Philadelphia	41	20	13	4	99	191	162
N.Y. Islanders	34	31	10	2	80	216	214
N.Y. Rangers	32	34	9	3	76	200	218
Pittsburgh	26	42	6	5	63	182	242

Northeast Division

	W	L	T	OT	Pts	GF	GA
y-Ottawa	49	21	8	1	107	252	178
x-Toronto	42	27	7	3	94	230	202
Boston	35	30	9	4	83	232	226
Montreal	28	34	8	9	73	196	228
Buffalo	26	35	9	8	69	179	203

Southeast Division

	W	L	T	OT	Pts	GF	GA
x-Tampa Bay	35	23	15	5	90	212	197
x-Washington	37	28	8	6	88	215	212
Atlanta	28	38	7	5	68	210	273
Florida	23	34	13	9	68	170	227
Carolina	22	39	11	6	61	167	227

WESTERN CONFERENCE

Central Division

	W	L	T	OT	Pts	GF	GA
x-Detroit	46	20	9	3	104	253	192
x-St. Louis	41	22	9	6	97	240	204
Chicago	28	33	11	6	73	191	213
Nashville	27	32	13	6	73	182	198
Columbus	28	40	7	3	66	202	250

Northwest Division

	W	L	T	OT	Pts	GF	GA
x-Vancouver	45	21	12	1	103	260	200
x-Colorado	39	18	13	8	99	236	183
x-Minnesota	40	27	10	1	91	190	170
x-Edmonton	36	25	8	9	89	218	214
Calgary	27	35	12	4	70	178	221

Pacific Division

	W	L	T	OT	Pts	GF	GA
y-Dallas	43	17	15	4	105	238	168
x-Anaheim	38	26	9	5	90	194	185
Phoenix	30	35	9	4	73	193	219
Los Angeles	30	37	6	5	71	190	212
San Jose	28	36	6	8	70	205	228

Two points for a win, one point for a tie and overtime loss.

x-clinched playoff spot

y-clinched division

Saturday's games

N.Y. Rangers 3, Boston 1
Detroit 6, St. Louis 2
Colorado 6, Phoenix 1
Ottawa 3, Montreal 1
Buffalo 3, Carolina 1
Toronto 4, Washington 3, OT
Philadelphia 3, Pittsburgh 0
Florida 1, Tampa Bay 1, tie
Atlanta 3, Nashville 2
Columbus 6, Calgary 4
Vancouver 5, Los Angeles 1
Dallas 4, San Jose 3

From The Associated Press

Continued from Page 7

His last hat trick came against Ottawa on March 16.

Blue Jackets 6, Flames 4

CALGARY, Alberta — Geoff Sander scored four goals, three in a row in the second period, and added an assist as Columbus beat Calgary.

Andrew Cassels had a goal and four assists, and Matt Davidson also scored for the Blue Jackets, who won for just the second time in 11 road games.

The Flames scored three times in the opening five minutes of the second period to take a 3-2 lead, but Sander responded with his 28th, 29th and 30th goals of the season in a span of 9:43. Each goal set up by Cassels.

Martin Gelinas scored twice, and Craig Conroy and Steve Montador added goals for Calgary.

Canucks 5, Kings 1

LOS ANGELES — Henrik Sedin and Markus Naslund scored second-period goals to lead Vancouver over Los Angeles.

Vancouver snapped its 14-game winless streak (0-9-3-1) in Los Angeles, that dated seven seasons to April 6, 1996. Canucks goalie Alexander Auld made 31 saves to help the Canucks maintain a four-point lead over Colorado in the Northwest Division race.

The Canucks scored two goals on

NHL continued

just four shots in the second period, breaking open a 1-1 game. Alexander Frolov scored for the Kings, and Matt Cooke had Vancouver's goal in the first period.

Trevor Linden and Daniel Sedin added power-play goals in the third period.

Thrashers 3, Predators 2

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — Dany Heatley and Marc Savard each had a goal and an assist as Atlanta stretched Nashville's franchise-worst winless streak to 11 games.

Greg Johnson and Denis Pederson scored for Nashville.

Stars 4, Sharks 3

SAN JOSE, Calif. — Brenden Morrow scored a power-play goal with 2:02 left, and Teemu Selanne's apparent goal as time expired was disallowed as Dallas beat San Jose.

Dallas held on to first place in the Western Conference and swept the season series from the Sharks — but only after a five-minute video review.

Jere Lehtinen had a goal and an assist. Ulf Dahlen got his 300th career goal, and Scott Young also scored as the Stars stayed one point ahead of Detroit in the race for home-ice advantage through the conference finals.

Teemu Selanne ended a 15-game goal-scoring drought, and Marco Sturm scored two goals — including the 100th of his career — for the Sharks, who never led while losing for the ninth time in 12 games.

Panthers 1, Lightning 1

TAMPA, Fla. — Martin St. Louis tied it with 36.1 seconds left in the third period as Southeast Division-leading Tampa Bay tied Florida.

Tampa Bay's Nikolai Khabibulin made 29 saves in extending his unbeaten streak to 15 games (11-0-4).

Sabres 3, Hurricanes 1

RALEIGH, N.C. — Miroslav Satan, Maxim Afinogenov and Daniel Briere scored power-play goals in a 7½-minute span as Buffalo beat Carolina.

Buffalo won its season-best fourth in a row, while the Hurricanes are winless in seven (0-5-2).

Avalanche 6, Coyotes 1

DENVER — Greg de Vries and Riku Hahl each scored a career-high two goals to lead Colorado past Phoenix.

The Avalanche took control in the first period, scoring three goals in just

2 minutes, 15 seconds to erase a 1-0 deficit.

Senators 3, Canadiens 1

MONTREAL — Patrick Lalime made 30 saves for his career-high 37th victory, and Ottawa eliminated Montreal from playoff contention.

Montreal will miss the playoffs for the fourth time in five years, the worst stretch in the franchise's 86 years in the NHL.

Flyers 3, Penguins 0

PHILADELPHIA — Jeremy Roenick had a goal and an assist, and Roman Cechmanek recorded his fifth shutout of the season as Philadelphia defeated Pittsburgh.

Philadelphia moved within two points of Atlantic Division-leading New Jersey.

Cechmanek made 20 saves to earn his 19th career shutout.

Maple Leafs 4, Capitals 3 (OT)

TORONTO — Mats Sundin scored at 2:56 of overtime as Toronto beat Washington.

Steve Konowalchuk and Peter Bondra scored third-period goals for the Capitals, who rallied to tie it after being down 3-1.

From The Associated Press